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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage March 17-19 on the DPP government's decision to appoint Mainland Affairs Council Chairman Joseph Wu as the new TECRO chief; on the drafting of a constitution for a "Second Republic"; and on the 2008 presidential elections. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline on page five that read "Major Task for Joseph Wu's Appointment to the United States is to Stabilize the Relationship among the Three Sides." The pro-unification "United Daily News" also ran a banner headline on page two that said "Joseph Wu, the First DPP Representative to the United States."

12. In terms of editorial and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said it will be Taipei's own wishful thinking if it treats Washington as a shortcut to Beijing by sending its official in charge of cross-Straits affairs to Washington D.C. A "Liberty Times" analysis said Wu's strength is that he is able to comprehend the DPP administration's policy. An analysis in the pro-status quo "China Times" said it is solely incumbent on the TECRO chief to communicate precisely with the United States about President Chen Shui-bian's "Four Wants and One Without" policy. A "United Daily News" column said Wu's appointment is also aimed at adding fuel to the already widely spreading name-change campaign. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post," on the other hand, refuted Assistant Secretary of State Glyn Davies's remarks before the House Thursday, in which he said that China's and Taiwan's "checkbox diplomacy" is distorting the democratic process in the Pacific Island nations. End summary.

13. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

A) "The Load Is Heavy for Joseph Wu, but the Course Will Not Be Long"

Columnist Antonio Chiang commented in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (3/19):

"... Because of the impact of Taiwan's political development, many clashes have occurred in the relations between Taipei and Washington over the past few years. As substantive changes happened in the triangular relationship among Taipei, Washington, and Beijing, the previous and incumbent TECRO chiefs became the scapegoats. The Green camp felt that they had worked perfunctorily and doubted their loyalty [to the DPP government], while the Blue camp criticized them with sarcasm and mockery for hanging onto men of influence and seeking the patronage of the enemies. Sometimes the Americans also had doubts about whether they had a reliable channel to communicate problems faithfully. This is a job that looks magnificent from the outside but whose hardships few people really understand. ...

"Since it came into power [a few years ago,] the DPP has been criticized as lacking real talent in foreign relations, national defense, finance and economics. In fact, the real problem lies in

the leader's ability to know his people and employ them to the best advantage. Now that A-Bian is about to complete his term, and he has just started to learn how to manage his people, it is already too late to really achieve anything. Taipei-Washington relations and cross-Strait relations are two birds that can be killed with one stone. Beijing has long treated Washington as a shortcut to Taipei, but it would be Taipei's wishful thinking if it wanted to follow suit and treat Washington as a shortcut to Beijing by sending the chairman of its Mainland Affairs Council to be stationed in Washington D.C."

B) "Diplomats Ought to Work for Their Country Rather Than for Their Own Political Party"

Washington correspondent Nadia Tsao noted in an analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (3/19):

"... Washington in general has a very favorable opinion of the DPP administration's decision to send Joseph Wu to serve as Taiwan's representative in the United States. In addition to his excellent qualifications, the main point is that he can truthfully comprehend the DPP government's policies. David Lee's appointment to Canada has also set an example for diplomats, showing that all talents work for their country and any political party can rely on them as long as they have ability."

C) "To Convey Bian's Ideas to the United States, Joseph Wu Steps up to the Battlefront"

Journalist Chiang Hui-chen noted in an analysis in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (3/19):

"... Ever since the beginning of 2007, Bian's administration has had its campaign strategy for 2008 ready. At first, it was the National Security Council that, in a big move, invited the retired heads of five foreign states to Taiwan to unveil the topic of 'transitional

justice.' Then, followed by the warm-up activities to the 2-28 Incident commemoration and the storms to get rid of anything related to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Chen Shui-bian tossed off the "Four Wants and One Without" remarks in early March, which has formally stated his four main focuses - namely, 'independence, name change, new constitution, and development.'

"While the Blue camp was using what was left of its energy following the 'battle between Wang Jin-pyng and Ma Ying-jeou' to attack the 'independence and name change' parts of Bian's "Four Wants," they overlooked the fact that 'new constitution and development' are the real campaign focus for Bian. It all hinges on the tactical promotion of [Taiwan's] cross-Strait policy in order to work out tactfully the plan for a 'new constitution and development,' and to accomplish this goal, it is solely incumbent on the TECRO chief to stabilize the pressure from the international community and to communicate precisely [with the United States].

"The authorities pointed out that the idea of the new constitution that Bian is about to toss off will be carried out step-by-step in the direction of systemic reform with appeals for a 'Second Republic' and a 'Cabinet [i.e., parliamentary] system.' As for the call for 'development,' this has subtly implied that the candidate for the 2008 presidential election that Bian will support will adjust the government's cross-Strait policy to make it meet the major economic interests that concerns people's livelihood. This was the main reason why Washington did not react as harshly as it before when it learned of the 'Four Wants and One Without.' ... The reason why the international community had paid close attention to Joseph Wu was the same as why he was appointed to head the TECRO. Wu will act and deliver Chen's messages on his behalf about the new constitution and the opening cross-Strait policy in the most precise way and most favorable terms for Bian during his remaining year in office."

D) "David Lee, the Departed"

The "Black and White" column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] wrote (3/19):

"Taiwan's representative to the United States David Lee will be

replaced by Joseph Wu. The move symbolized that the Bian administration has decided thoroughly to abandon the course of using career diplomats, and it is also aimed at adding fuel to the name change campaign which is already spreading like wildfire. ... Over the more than two years during which Lee headed the TECRO office, there have been constant rumors that he would be replaced. This situation reflected that he has failed to gain the trust he deserves as a career diplomat with over 20 years of experience in the Blue-Green politics. Now that he will be transferred to Canada, he can finally get rid of this 'infernal' diplomatic career in which he, as a 'Blue person,' can hardly speak on behalf of the Green camp. ..."

E) "Checkbook Diplomacy Is Much the Same, No Matter Who Pays"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post"
[circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/19):

"... Glyn Davies told Congressmen both Taiwan and China are trying to outdo each other by throwing huge sums of money at the Pacific leaders, and the United States remains uneasy about the competition for recognition in the South Pacific. 'To the extent that (China) and Taiwan engage in 'checkbook diplomacy' to gain favor with Pacific leaders,' he was quoted as saying, 'the political process in those countries will be distorted.' ..."

"But it's unfair for Davies to claim Taipei's checkbook diplomacy is distorting the democratic process in the Pacific Island nations. Uncle Sam himself extended aid in grants and financial assistance in other forms to keep or win over diplomatic allies against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Didn't Washington aid Saddam Hussein in his war on Iran? What's the Contra scandal all about? Of course, that assistance was not called checkbook diplomacy, albeit no one can see where it differed fundamentally from what Taipei and Beijing are said to engage in. Besides, the diplomatic war between Taiwan and China little affects the political process of the island nations in the South Pacific. Washington wants all of them to be free and democratic. Democracy evolves. It cannot be bought. Nor can it be handed over on a silver plate just as the United States has been trying to do to post-Hussein Iraq."

YOUNG